

THE
BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH'S
S E R M O N,
BEFORE THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE HOUSE OF LORDS,

JANUARY 30, 1768.

Die Lunæ 1^o Febr. 1768.

Ordered,

BY the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled, That the Thanks of this House be, and are hereby, given to the Lord Bishop of *Peterborough*, for the Sermon by him preached before this House, on *Saturday* last, in the Abbey-Church, *Westminster*. And he is hereby desired to cause the same to be forthwith printed and published.

ASHLEY COWPER,

Cler. Parliamentor.

694.2.18.
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A
S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE
LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL,

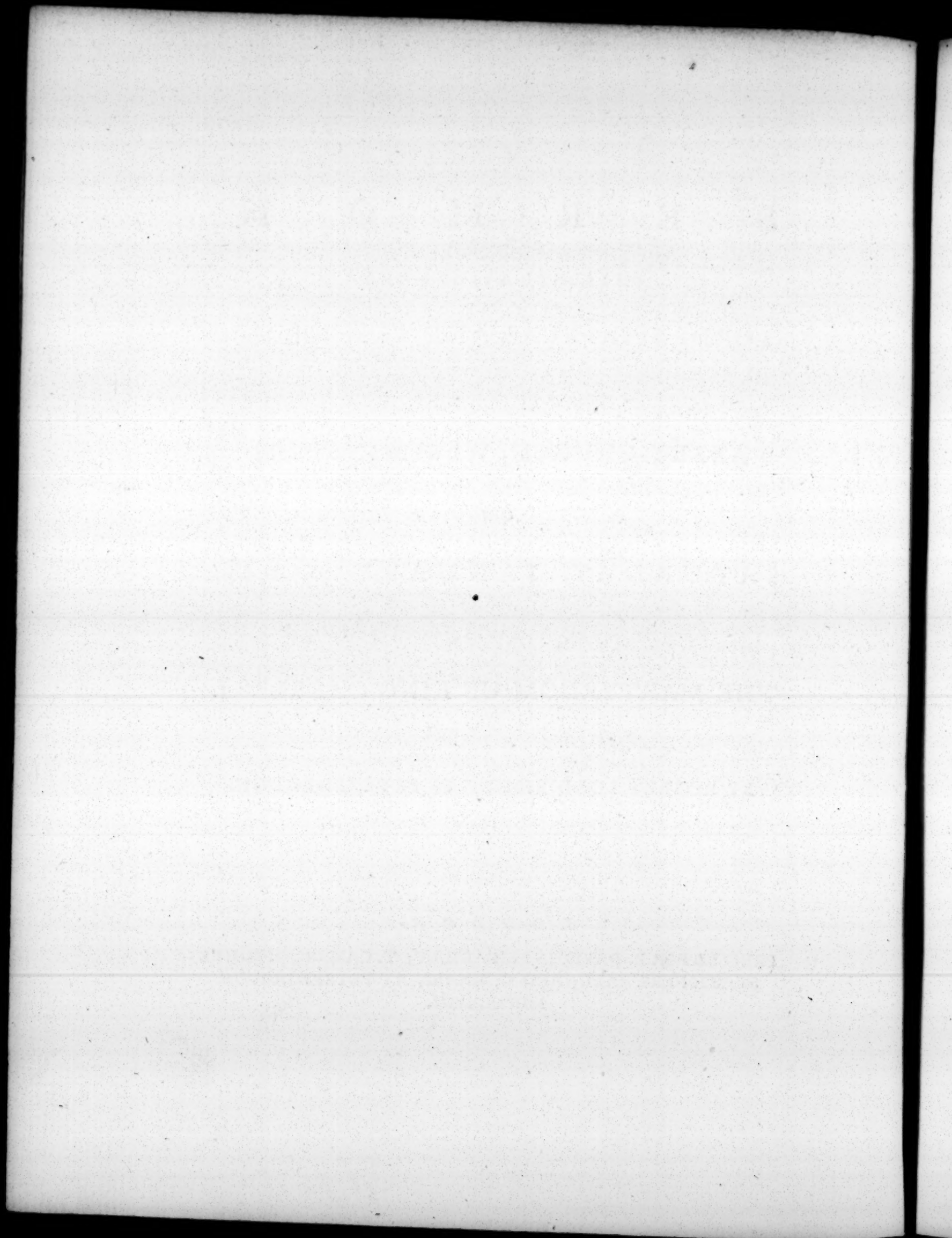
IN THE
ABBAY-CHURCH, WESTMINSTER;

ON
SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 1768:

Being the Day appointed to be observed as the Day of
THE MARTYRDOM OF KING CHARLES I.

R. Lamb
BY ROBERT LORD BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH.

L O N D O N:
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MDCCLXVIII.



THE EPISTLE GENERAL OF JAMES, CHAP. III. VER. 16.

FOR WHERE ENVYING AND STRIFE IS, THERE IS CON-
FUSION AND EVERY EVIL WORK.

THE whole life of Man is but one continued struggle between Reason and Passion; how serious in its consequences, and of how much importance to him, will appear in this, that his happiness, under every possible variety of his character, depends totally upon the issue of this encounter. Where Reason prevails, there is "Love, Joy, Peace." When Reason is dispossessed by the Passions—or—"where Envy and, its sure concomitant, Strife is, there is Confusion;" which, from its sphere of influence, receives its character, of private or public, civil or religious.

B

What

What the particular degrees of wretchedness were, that distinguished the early state of Anarchy and unsocial life, when the passions were lawless and extravagant, and man's best security against the brutal violence, the acts of oppression, the hourly perils that threatened him, was the security that he found in being still more savage than his invader — is an enquiry that would shock humanity. Suffice it to say, that the blessings of Society sprung out of this confusion; a state, wherein the mutual intercourse of man with man, called together by their common wants, the friendly collision of the social passions, promised to strike out all that was good, and all that was benevolent in his nature; and the powers of human Government, armed with its several instruments of coercion, were appointed to repress what was evil in it.

But hitherto, the ancient root of bitterness was still left springing at the heart.

The same cause, which manifestly had given birth to the social state, was at hand to be productive of its destruction! The growing wants, the clashing interests of mankind, which had their rise from the irregular lustings of the heart, without some controuling principle, would soon have re-kindled into contentions; and run the world back into its native state of Anarchy. Indeed, the natural ties of duty and benevolence — or — the most perfect “Law in the mind”
would

would have had as little success in warring with this "Law
" of sin in our members;" as the natural powers of Govern-
ment, in counteracting the " Evil Works " that followed
it.

Some higher obligations, in short, RELIGION, a positive Religion, was wanting; to give weight and authority, by giving proper sanctions, to Both. How, or in what manner men, in earlier periods of the world, carried on the purposes of Government—the purposes of Society—upon the strength of religious principles purely fictitious and imaginary, concerns us little to enquire; so that they did it by religious principles at all.

That false religions however, in some periods, have had this influence, is a fact as incontestible, as that positive institutions, and positive graces from God Almighty, at other times have lost it. And it may be matter of much instruction to all, of grief and shame perhaps to some, of the more humanized ages, that have succeeded, on one side to reflect how far a fixed and awakened sense of religion—how far *any* principles, steadily pursued, will carry us; and—to see on the other—how that, by a gradual inattention to religion, or a gross contempt of it, it may be possible to lose the influence even of the best.

As this seems to be a leading reflection, suggested by this day's solemnity ; as, under this awful persuasion, we now, in our political capacity, are here assembled together : let us see, since Religion is the strength of Government, how worthy of *all honour*, on this account ; how worthy of every degree of attention, from a people, and the Rulers of a people, is the genuine spirit of the Christian.

This religion, rising upon the ruins of other religions, long ago sunk, together with the narrow policies they supported, enlarges the *common* security, the common happiness of all the sons of men ; preaching peace unto all ; knitting together, for this purpose, the several members of this wide-extended body, by Love ; the spirit, that animates, that harmonizes, by “ working through,” the whole.

As the Christian religion is the friend to man in general, it is the friend to him, under his noblest character, as social and civil—the friend of Government ; establishing this “ ordinance of man” as the ordinance of God, and making the various reciprocations of duty, in this state, operate upon the heart—not as so many arbitrary impositions of human Laws—but, with the strength of Duties, that have their true foundation in the divine.

As Christianity advances this heavenly state of order, union and peace among men, as it backs the powers and
purposes

purposes of civil government—by calling up every social virtue to warm, by supplying every powerful sanction to move the heart, even of a whole people, as the “heart of “one man,” to support it—so—doth it secure the health of the common body by a service not less essential to it; by subduing the peccant humours within it; by removing the grounds of contention and difference; by restraining the turbulent passions; indeed, by eradicating the seeds of wrath and envy; which, not only prey upon the vitals of private happiness, but “eat, even as doth a canker,” the heart of civil constitutions.

For it is to be lamented, as part of the imperfection of our present state, that there is in the constitution of man—what all human constitutions of government upon earth have found themselves very hard matched to subdue—namely, a Lust of being superior to wholesome restraint: a temper—alike subversive of the grand object of government, the Happiness of the whole; whether it shews itself on one side in unconstitutional exertions of Power, or on the other in lawless Liberty—an impatience of government, full as unconstitutional.

The history of the world will tell us, under how many terrifying shapes of wickedness, distraction, and wretchedness, this temper has at sundry times appeared.—Our imagination may help us in marking out the character which is natural to it.

The

The natural temper of Power, unchecked by principle, is the natural temper of the passions; violent, restless, and prompt to extend dominion. The natural spirit of Liberty, for the same reasons, is ever given to exceed, and to grow exorbitant. Accordingly, just as often as both the one and the other have been circumstanced to take advantage of their respective forms of government, or occasions still more casual, to push their claim for dominion; so often, have either the unbridled encroachments of power usurped upon all the natural and constitutional rights of mankind, introduced confusion, and destroyed every honest purpose of government; or, the extravagant enlargement of liberty, laying waste the sacred fences of lawful and rational controul, its best, its natural security, have had the same fatal influence upon the interest of the world, and upon itself, by introducing the same fatal confusions. Indeed, in forms of government the most perfect, the cases have been common, where the too zealous defenders of Prerogative, and the warm guardians of Liberty, have happened to stand as far wide of the common cause they were jointly engaged to support, namely, the peace and well-being of society, as they were of a good understanding between themselves.

Now the Gospel Spirit keeps up a proper temperament throughout the civil body, conducive to the health of the several parts of it.

The



The same authority, the Gospel of Christ, which, in the strongest and plainest terms, puts *us* under the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate, in terms full as plain, teaches *Him* the proper limits of his jurisdiction; calling him, “the Minister “for Good”—precludes thus all occasions of contention between the Powers and the Subjects of government, about the constitutional authority of the Ruler; a point, which, very fatally to the happiness of both, has been sometimes decided by the Sword—and, with the like favourable aspect to the peace of society, fixes beyond a doubt (what seems often as little understood by the advocates of Liberty) that the most perfect freedom is consistent with Limitations—that “Rulers, or lawful Authority, are not a terror,” but a common means of security to, the common Guardians of, Civil, that is, of rational, Liberty:—that therefore to be subject to these means, as the dutiful servants of government; and of consequence to resist them not, but upon principles of Freedom, equally becoming us as “servants of God,” as well as servants of society, is to be free indeed.

Not that Christ has settled the precise measures or extent of Submission, any more than he has the precise object of civil Obedience.

To have prescribed forms to earthly Governments would not only have been little in the style and true character of Him, who professed to have no designs upon these, but what
were

were truly spiritual — “ Whose kingdom was not of this “ world ” — but would have actually unhinged the peaceable settlement of governments — of the civil powers that then were — would have been effectually sending round the several kingdoms of the habitable world — not “ Peace, but a “ Sword.”

As little was it in the nature and design of a religion for the *whole* world, to become minutely a “ Judge and Divider ” between the intricate claims of constitutional *Power* and constitutional *Right*, in the several states of it.

But when the different constitutions of the earth had respectively settled mens lawful claims upon government ; when the *laws* of particular countries had determined what were illegal acts of power, the Gospel seasonably steps in to determine the proper measures of Resistance : — a resistance, to be conducted, not as the passions of men have at times conducted it, by that violence of temper — by that madness of strife, that quickly loses sight of the lawful *ends* of resistance, and never fails to run wide of the proper *means* of it — by those unhappy methods of reclaiming the abuses of Regal Authority, which have, in some periods, been applied to no better a purpose than to strengthen them ; giving birth, at the same time, to such savage abuses of liberty as have overthrown government ; — but, by that sober and composed frame of mind — that equal temper (to flesh and blood,

blood, to human passions, difficult to hit) which lets us keep sight of, in the same instant, the merits of Contention; and weigh soberly the measures of Resistance. A temper — which, though at variance with Slavery, is not less at variance with the fierce feuds and contentions, which have often rent in sunder the best-compacted systems of civil government — is at variance with the violent passions of men; which have, under the colour of making them free, run whole societies headlong into *servitude*.

How necessary this genuine temper of the Gospel — this pure, this peaceable spirit of Christianity is, to preside, like the ruling Genius, over free States; which allow the passions of men a wide latitude, and where, either from Power or from Liberty, not under this influence, “offences must needs come,” all know, who know the necessity of keeping the jarring elements of such states together.

Well had it been for the interests of this Country, if the same spirit of moderation had ruled the counsels, or qualified the contests, of King and People in former times; those unhappy times of division and violence, which the present solemnity calls upon us to lament; when a far worse spirit had got possession of the hearts of Both — when new, and perhaps illegal, claims of Prerogative, and an unconstitutional exercise of kingly power, stained the glory of our laws and government, not less than those ferocious and unconstitu-

tutional measures of redress tarnished the merits of that Liberty that opposed them—when both offered like violence to the genius of the constitution—mediately or immediately contributed to blow those flames of dissention, which, without distinction, levelled the cottages of the poor, and the lofty palace of the Prince; and left civil discord in full possession of the miserable ruins of a kingdom; which, like a fiend truly infernal, stalked over the land, rejoicing in the “sparks” it had kindled.”

If an unhappy Prince attempted what was unnatural to the temper of the constitution, and the liberties of a free people, many circumstances of his situation conspire to bespeak our pity for him: led to this fatal exertion of power, by early prepossessions in favour of it; encouraged by the vague exercise of Prerogative in former reigns; and fixed in these prejudices by the obsequious compliance of those, who were the last people to give the principles themselves, or the measures that followed them, establishment; being the sworn Expounders, either of the true spirit of the Laws, or the true sense of the Scriptures; and yet most unnaturally prostituted Both, to give a sanction to Oppression. In short, if illegal were the measures of the Prince, full as intemperate was the spirit of Resistance in the People; a Spirit, not intent upon those healing measures of resistance, which a better—a more Christian spirit, would have taught them; not qualified with expedients, tenderly to relieve the prejudices of the king; which

which there was good reason to think, from the private virtues of the man, were not invincible ; but a spirit of intolerance, of envy, strife, and animosity, which encreased the violence on either side, and ended in confusion to both.

And no wonder, when even Religion, (the earthly sensual Religion of the times), adapting itself to the principles of Prince and People, instead of allaying their heats, “ forgot “ its quenching nature,” and added fire to the contentions on either side, and fresh strength to faction, by flattering the pride of Power on the one hand, or colouring over the evils of licentious Liberty on the other; and by setting aside all the civil distinctions of Magistracy as inconsistent with the Gospel. Inflamed by these principles, men plunged into the last extravagances of Rebellion ; wherein every species of civil intemperance was followed by such an insolent and barbarous triumph of liberty over Sovereign Power, so qualified by forms of law, and so palliated by appearances of religion, with so little of the real power of either, as turned our Country itself, and these glorious Distinctions of our Country, into a “ proverb of reproach, a bye word among the “ nations ;” as a Country where Liberty, where even Laws were savage, where Religion sanguinary.

Few of the real friends to liberty were perhaps chargeable at first with these distractions. They contended only for Redress. But there were men of a different temper—who

without any honest principle engaged in, and enflamed these civil commotions; who spirited, who in turn headed these oppositions, with baser views. The measures of Resistance hence became fierce and implacable; and each party, instead of regulating coolly the claims of the other, contended now with that violence of passion, which thought of nothing but defeating them.

But, let us here drop a veil over what then passed at those Altars of Liberty; nor stand to see the last agonies of Liberty itself expiring under its own violence; much less to behold, in the sequel, a fine Constitution, with the several monuments of its ancient dignity, its ancient happiness, all reversed, and miserably sunk into ruin, under these wild attempts to save it; when Anarchy and Confusion, the sure ends of Strife, worked their full, their natural effects upon our Country.

Enough has been said, without enlarging upon these melancholy topics, to remind us of the necessity of Self-government, to the well-being and security of a people. Indeed, to teach us the necessity there is for Religion, which influences the hearts of the several members of a state, to come in support of that system of human laws, whatever it be, which barely reaches their Persons; since, without it, as we ourselves have experienced, there will be little security even in the best.

Now

Now, it is the peculiar blessing of the times we live in, to see not even the most remote tendency to those troubles, which distracted former times; in the measures or the temper of the Prince who is so happily set over us; and from whose innate goodness, approved conduct, and strict regard to the laws and constitution of our Country, we have the greatest security for our Liberties.

But there is another peculiarity in our times, not less favourable to the Peace of Government.

It was not altogether owing to the heat and violence of the times of confusion we this day lament, that men kept no medium between the opposite extremes of Obedience and Rebellion; but, to the cases of obedience being so unsettled, that a cooler sense of duty would have been often puzzled to distinguish where the just exceptions to it began. But now, the Limits of Power, and the Rights of the Subject, have been long so happily settled, so decisively, as to leave without excuse, either the Sovereign, who contends for a latitude of Power, to the prejudice of legal Liberty; or the Subject, who relaxes the terms of Obedience, to the disturbance of Government.

The dangers which threaten our times, are but too justly grounded in this last species of Disorder, *Abuse of Liberty*.

The

The factions which split us into parties—which delay, divide our counsels—which not unfrequently disappoint their good effects, in the critical exertion of the Powers of Government: The querulousness of temper, so common among us, under any real or any supposed errors of administration; but above all, that impatience of controul, that insolence of liberty, which shews itself dreadfully in popular tumults, in defiance of all laws, and all wholesome authority; discovers a spirit, that, under various shapes, and by several approaches, tends to unhinge the order and the peace of government; and ultimately to dissolve the happiness of society.—A spirit, which has its rise from some of the worst of the human passions; and calls for the serious attention of all, who wish well to the establishment of their Country, to conquer and subdue—calls, in short, for an attention to Religion, which can only “still this madness of the people;” and bid it effectually “be at peace.”

May then Religion—may the divine principles of Christianity, assiduously cultivated, correct these disorders of our State. And under this Influence, may “brotherly * kindness
“and charity, devotion and piety, concord and unity, with all
“other virtues, so flourish among us, that they may be the
“stability of our times, and make this Church a praise in
“the earth.”

* Second Collect in the fifth of November service.

T H E E N D.

